

# Faith Is Action

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## THE FOUR GROUNDS



# THE FOUR GROUNDS

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*“Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples” (John 15:8).*

One thing God demands of all of His children is to bear good fruit. Not all of His children will bear the same ones or the same amount: Some will bear 30, some 60, and some 100 fold. Jesus taught in the *Parable of the Sower* that the good seed brought forth some 30, some 60, and some 100 fold, but you will only bring forth fruit if you are good soil sown with the good seed.

A parable is an illustrative story that makes the truth more understandable to those who are believers while obscuring the message to skeptics. (Ref. Matthew 13:10-17). Jesus used parables in much of His teaching, and we have to get out of it what truth He was trying to make understandable. All of God’s people are to know the truth of the parable, because Jesus told the disciples after He gave them the parable, “that the skeptics have

eyes but can’t see, have ears but can’t hear, and have a heart, but can’t believe. But you, the children of the kingdom, are to know the truth,” and He gave the interpretation.

Thus Jesus declared, “*Who hath ears, let him hear*” (v. 9). Since all men have ears, what did He mean? We are supposed to hear with understanding, because Jesus said that if we don’t know this parable, then we can’t know any of His other parables. This is the key, because whatever types are used here, will stay the same wherever else we find them in the Bible.

Jesus called the *field* the *world* in Matt. 13:44, and in the world in this parable, there are four types of soil, or four types of *hearers of the Word*. All four types heard the Word:

*“...Behold a sower went forth to sow; And when he sowed, some seeds fell by the way side, and the fowls came and devoured them up: Some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth: and forthwith*

*they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth: And when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away. And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprung up, and choked them: But other fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some an hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold”* (Matthew 13:1-8).

(For a broader understanding of this Parable, please also read Mark 4:3-20 & Luke 8:5-15.)

All four grounds received the same seed—*good seed*—“the Word of God,” but the difference was the type of soil it was sown in. Before we look at these four grounds individually, note how the seed interacted with each type of soil: **by** the wayside—**upon** stony ground—**among** thorns—all of these were unfruitful! But the good ground proved to be fruitful because the seed fell **into it**, and remained!

## The Wayside

All received the seed, but “some seed fell *by the wayside*.” The *wayside* referred to a dividing strip of land between two plots of ground, and it served as a path for the farmers to walk on. Sometimes they might have to walk an hour to reach the end of their plot. Because of this, it was well-traveled, and the ground was hard deep down. So when the seed fell on it, it did not penetrate the soil, and with the people’s feet beating it down and scattering it, the fowl of

the air then came and stole the seed. It did not even take root at all. The devil stole the good Word of salvation *immediately*.

## Stony Ground

The second group of hearers upon whom the seed fell was *stony ground*. Jesus did not mean that it was full of stones, but that it was actually a *rock bed* with a very shallow layer of dirt on top. Thus, when the seed went into the shallow ground, especially with the hot climate of Israel, it germinated real fast and came up quickly. I’ve seen new Christians like this: They got saved, and the first week you would think they were going to win the whole world for Jesus. I remember a sister, who every time a tent meeting came to town, would be on the front row, shouting, jumping, but before the tent meeting was over, she was gone with the wind. One day she got to jumping and shouting in the meeting and her tobacco snuff popped out of her mouth. She ought to have had enough sense to leave it out, but since she didn’t, God was casting it out of her!

Those on the shallow ground, because they didn’t have any root, when that Middle East sun got hot, it burnt them up. They withered away, never producing fruit, never coming to maturity.

## The Thorny Ground

The third group of hearers fell *amongst thorns*. Now the thorns were not visible yet, because He said that

the thorns *grew up* and *choked out* the good Word of God. In other words, the seeds of the thorns were *already in the ground*, but they had not grown up yet. It was after the good seed was sown into the ground, that the thorns grew up. Because the seeds of the thorns were in the ground *first*, they had a stronger root system, and they over-crowded the good seed, choking out the plant and its fruit. Its growth was stunted and it too became unfruitful. It is the most deceiving ground of all, because it holds forth a promise of good fruit at the beginning, but it does not go on to perfection in fruit-bearing.

## The Good Ground

Then some fell into *good ground* and they bore fruit and brought forth some 30, some 60, some 100 fold.

Thus Jesus said, *“Take heed how you hear. For to him that has shall more be given, and to him that has not, shall be taken away even that which he seemeth to have”* (Lk. 8:15). He was referring to the *understanding of the Word*. His disciples asked Him to explain the parable, and He said, *“You are the children of the King, and it is given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom.”* (The Bible word *mysteries* does not mean something that can’t be understood, but that it can only be understood by divine revelation. It takes God to reveal a secret, and God reveals His secrets to His obedient children. Deuteronomy 29:29 says: *“The secret things belong unto the LORD our*

*God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law.”*)

*“Hear ye therefore the parable of the sower. When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which received seed by the way side.*

*“But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it; Yet hath he not root in himself, but endureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended.*

*He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful.*

*“But he that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word, and understandeth it; which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty”* (Matt. 13:18-23).

Jesus explained that the people who “fell by the wayside” are they who hear the Word, but do not understand it. They may hear the message that Jesus saves, Jesus heals and Jesus delivers, but before they even get out of the church, the devil talks them out of it. He steals the Word, and It doesn’t start to germinate in

their hearts.

Sister Hardy was an example of this. We both went to the same altar one night. I was already saved and she wasn't. I was going to receive the Baptism of the Holy Ghost, but ironically, the Holy Ghost fell on her. The Spirit of God shook her all over the place, while the devil was telling me all kinds of stupid things, trying to get me to stop her. He said to me, "They are attacking her." He wanted me to get up and push away people who were praying around her, and say, "Come on," because she was shouting, "Hallelujah! Hallelujah," and she was not far from speaking in tongues!

Afterwards, before she got out the door, the devil said to her, "What did you do?", because this was all strange to her. She thought to herself: *What did I do? Am I going crazy?* The devil said, "What you got was *nervousness*. You have to get yourself under control, *or you'll lose your mind!*" So she rejected it, and didn't let it take root in her heart. It was several years before she was truly saved.

Another time I was testifying to my brother when I first got saved, and he kept bringing his natural, analytical arguments. When someone reasons with the natural mind, bringing all kind of natural things, you can't tell them spiritual things, because they can't know them. One thing we discussed was the Baptism of the Holy Ghost, because my daughter, Sharon, was just 7 years old when God gave

her the Baptism, and she spoke in tongues. I said to my brother, "*What about speaking in tongues?*" He said "*They just get nervous.*" I replied, "*You're the most nervous guy I know in the world, and I have never heard you speak in tongues!*" He couldn't explain that!

## Applying The Parable

The first group of hearers are those who come in the service, and when the Word of God comes, they get happy at the message, but before they go out, the devil says, "There's nothing to it." The devil stole it, because the soil of their hearts wasn't prepared, and the seed of the Word could not penetrate that fallow ground.

The second group are those where the seed fell on the ground that was rock bed with only a couple of inches of dirt on top. Luke 8:13 says, "*They believed for awhile.*"

I don't know what the "once saved-always saved" teachers are going to do with this one, because Jesus said that *they were believers*, and they *believed for awhile*. How does anyone get saved? What did Paul tell the Philippian jailer when he asked, "*What must I do to be saved?*" Paul said: "*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved...*" (Acts 16:31).

Jesus said that they believed for awhile. They were living right, but when persecutions and tests came, they were offended, and they gave up. They fell away, because they couldn't

endure the tests and persecutions, *because they didn't have root*. They didn't develop a prayer life. They didn't develop an ear to continually hear the Word. "*For man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God*" (Matt. 4:4). The Word is our spiritual bread. It is life, and if you don't eat it, you can not stay alive spiritually.

Without a root system, no plant, tree, or even grass can stay alive. We must be "*rooted and grounded in the Word and stablished in the faith, abounding therein*" (Ref. Col. 2:7).

The believer's spiritual life is sustained by the Word of God, prayer, and attending church. If we fail in any one of these, then the thorns of the cares of life begin to grow up. The good seed also fell amongst the ground that already had the seeds of thorns, but they hadn't grown up yet. *Afterwards* the thorns grew up, and because they had a stronger root system, they over-powered the good seed and choked it out.

With all my heart I believe a majority of the Christian world today are in the third ground. They have allowed the thorns to grow up and choke out that good Word that the devil couldn't steal right away like the first ground. They have already been through trials and tests and persecutions without giving up like the second ground. But if you quit weeding your garden, you can plant blue ribbon quality seed in the most fertile soil ever, and eventually, the thorns,

the thistles, and the weeds will take it over. Jesus said that the third ground grew, but it did not come to maturity.

Let's use corn as an illustration: First you get the blade, then the stalk, the baby ear, and then the full ear. Even when it has progressed to the stage of the ear, if then something stunts it, it stops growing. Did you ever pull back the husk of the corn and see little, hard, under-developed kernels in there? That's like the third-ground Christians. They were true Christians, because the Bible said that they believed, but the thorns and thistles got stronger, because the third ground did not keep a prayer life, did not keep a Word study, and quit going to church. We are not to forsake the assembly where we should be *exhorted in the faith, instructed in righteousness, reproved and rebuked with all longsuffering and doctrine* (Heb. 10:25, 2 Tim. 4:2); even *sharply* at times so we might be *sound in faith* (Titus 1:13).

### Thorns of Greed

What was in the soil of the third ground, though undeveloped, that along with the good seed was growing? It produced the blade, the ear, little kernels of corn, but something stopped it before it reached maturity. Why?

They quit going to church, reading and studying the Bible, searching the Scriptures, *and they were not taking heed to the Word of God*, watering it with the Spirit and weeding and feeding it with the good seed of

prayer, and “*the deceitfulness of lusts and riches,*” greedy prosperity, cropped up and choked it. What is the really big thing now that gets people out to services? *Prosperity*. People have moved beyond God’s blessings to *covetousness* which is lust in the form of greed. And the Lord identified this as a *thorn* that chokes out your spiritual life, because the Bible never said to seek prosperity. On the contrary, Jesus stressed, “*Take heed and beware (double warning) of covetousness: for a man’s life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth*” (Luke 12:15).

Do you want to know how to prosper? The main thing is to *delight yourself in the Word of God and meditate in it* according to Psalm 1. The word *meditate* in the Hebrew means “*to mutter over and over.*” In other words, you quote it over to yourself. You have quality (undistracted, unhurried) time with God when He can take that Word, that you put in your spiritual computer, and quicken it by the Spirit, and bring it out and give you the meaning and application. Just like Jesus told *everybody* this Parable of the Sower, but He came later and *gave its revelation to His disciples*. He had to pull them aside. He didn’t give them the interpretation with all of the crowd, but He took them aside and opened up the mysteries.

You have to give God some quality time if you want to receive revelation. You can’t be running to every shop and sale in the world. These are

cares of life: *What am I going to wear? What am I going to eat? What about my car?* (Ref. Matt. 6:31). People are so caught up in these things, they’re working themselves into spiritual poverty, and if they continue, into Hell!

I don’t want to become like the third ground who failed to come to maturity. Jesus didn’t say that the seed didn’t grow; He said that it did not come to *perfection* (Lk. 8:14). The term *perfection* in the Greek means *to come to maturity*. It’s like when the farmer goes out to pluck an ear of corn to see how it’s maturing. He pulls back the husk to see how much longer it needs to mature, and the farmer is praying for one more hot spell, because corn has to have heat to mature. Just one more little test, that one more little trial that you and I go through, and stand true, will bring that Word in our hearts to maturity.

Once the corn has matured, the farmer can pick it off, steam it, and put soft butter on it, and when he bites into it, its sweet juice runs down his mouth. In Maryland we grow *Silver Queen*, and it’s so sweet! That’s what the Master wants: good fruit! He doesn’t want after all His work, labor, patience, and waiting for the rain to water it, to end up with a bunch of dry, withered stalks. If He can use it for anything, the farmer grinds it up and feeds it to the hogs.

## Examine Yourself

Jesus warned, “Beware of the

cares of life. Beware of the deceitfulness of riches and the pleasures of the world.” We have a pleasure-seeking, worldly church today.

What’s so good about God is that He lets us judge ourselves (1 Cor. 11:31). He said, “*Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves, Know ye... that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates*” (2 Cor. 13:5).

If I want to make it, I have to see how my garden’s growing. What is the best description of the first ground who hear the Word and immediately the devil comes and steals it? “In one ear, and out of the other.” The Bible meaning of hearing means “to come to the knowledge of it and purpose in your heart to do it.”

Jesus said seven times in Revelation: “*Let him that hath an ear, hear what the Spirit has to say to the churches.*” In other words—*Understand it*. Jesus said that many have eyes, but they see not, and have ears, but they hear not, and have hearts, but do not understand. God’s Word is going forth continually to the Church, but you and I have an individual responsibility to hear with understanding and obedience. Note that while Jesus was addressing the entire congregations of the entire seven churches, He applied the responsibility to hear the message to the individuals: “*Let him that hath an ear, hear...*”

Christian Friend, God’s telling you to examine yourself. “Know your own self that Christ be in you except

you be a reprobate.” If you are a reprobate, Christ is not in you. Now, listen to how Paul disciplined himself in 1 Cor. 9:27: “*But I keep my body under and bring it into subjection: lest by any means when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.*” Paul was actually saying, “I punch my body out; I KO it. I black its eyes so that I cannot see anything ungodly, and I bring it under subjection. My body does not rule me by its appetites: I rule my body: Lest (for fear) that after I have preached to others, and I don’t bring this body under subjection, I myself will become a castaway.”

The question is, What is the Greek word for *castaway*? Some preachers who believe in eternal security say, “God just puts them on the shelf and doesn’t use them anymore.” That’s right, but that’s not all. The Greek word is the same one that’s translated *reprobate*: *ADOKIMOS*, and it means “*to be disapproved and rejected.*” The sense is, “I have been examined and have then been disapproved.” It’s like working on an assembly line at a General Motors plant. You’re on the line building a certain part; let’s say the motor, and it looks beautiful to you. It’s shiny brand new, but an inspector comes and puts his different gauges on it, and if it doesn’t meet up, he does *adokimos*—He says, “I reject it.” It’s pulled from the line, and they don’t put it in an automobile. When God rejects you, He doesn’t put you in His kingdom.

## If You Do These Things

Peter said, “*If you do these things, you shall never fall: For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.*”

“*But he that lacks these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins*” (2 Peter 1:9).

This refers to past sins repented of and turned from. If I was saved yesterday, but have sinned today and haven’t repented and turned from my sin, I am not going into the kingdom. “*If you do these things...*” *If* means *conditions must be met*—“*You shall never fall.*” Then an entrance shall be ministered to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of God.

“*For if these things be in you and abound...*” (*faith, diligence, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, charity*) “*... they make you that you shall **neither be barren nor unfruitful** in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ*” (vv. 5-8).

“God is looking for fruit—and for abundant fruit. The Greek tense means *continued increase* and even to *excess*, because we are always bringing forth *more fruit*. Jesus said, “*Every branch in me that beareth not fruit my Father taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth (prunes) it, that it may bring forth more fruit.... If a man abide not in me, he’s cast forth as a branch (cut off), and is withered, and men gather them and cast them into the fire, and*

*they are burned*” (John 15:2 & 6).

This is the fate of those who are of the second and third grounds and are like unto those who “*have forgotten that they were purged (pruned) from their old sins.*”

“*But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed has returned to her waddling in the mire*” (2 Peter 2:22).

This is the true picture of those who have come out of the filth of the world, been washed and purged of their sins, and then go back again. These are who make up the second and third grounds. Only one out of four—twenty-five percent will go all the way according to Jesus’ parable. This is a sobering thought—one out of four! Which means 3 out of 4 will not make it in!

No wonder Jesus stressed, “*Take heed...*”! I’m not going to return to sin. I’ve turned to God. I’ve made an about face and I’m walking in Him. Closer and closer I can see the entrance into the kingdom of God. I’m talking about the Millennial reign of Christ. I’m pursuing and running this race, and I’m looking (away from the world) and “*Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher (the leader and completer) of my faith; Who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God*” (Hebrews 12:2).